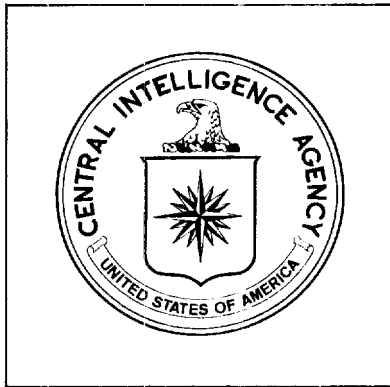


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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Albania: One More Gone

A high-level Foreign Ministry official may have joined the growing list of prominent Albanians who have been purged in recent months.

Skender Konica, head of the Foreign Ministry's directorate for relations with Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy, has "disappeared,"

rumors are circulating in Tirana that Konica was pushing too hard for closer ties with the West.

Albania has recently improved its relations with the countries for which Konica was responsible, but he may have become impatient with the slow pace of improvement--particularly because during the 1950s he had served for seven years in Rome and may have developed a special affinity for the Italians. This tour of duty may have made his motives all the more suspect to Albania's xenophobic leadership.

If Konica has been purged, he joins Defense Minister Balluku, Minister of Communications Qirko, and Finance Minister Verki, who were ousted in the latter half of 1974 for reasons that have not yet been specified.

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